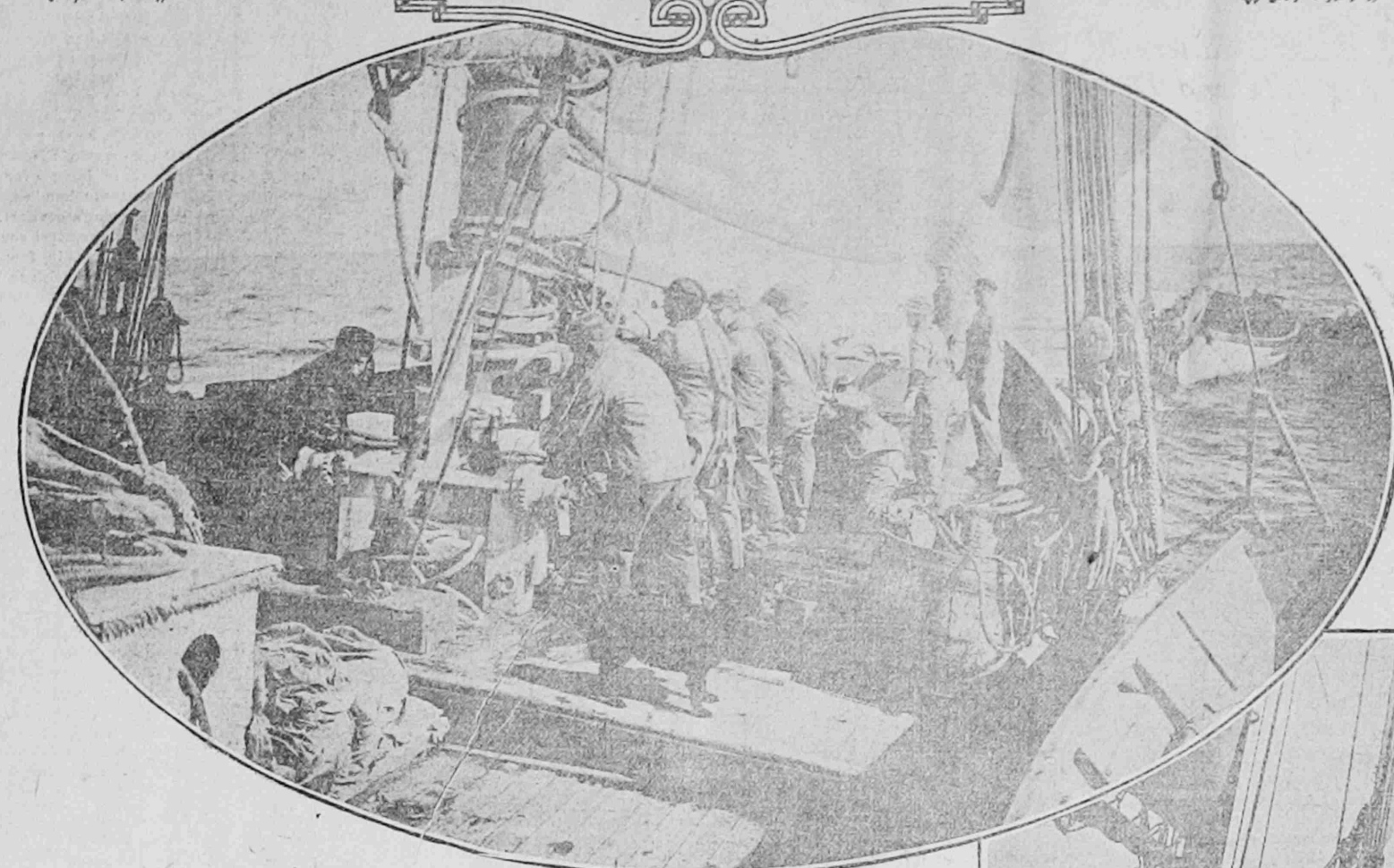


How SIDNEY DRAKE BROUGHT HOME the FISH



HE Was Somewhat Delayed in Reaching Home, and What Happened in Between, Being a True Story and Not an Excuse, Must Be Set Down Among Unusual Adventures



Let Him Help with Tackle and About the Deck as if They Were Glad to Have Him Aboard.

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THE hero of this adventure is a well-to-do resident of New York and well known in the Middle West, where his ancestors settled early in the eighteenth century. The story is much more effective when he tells it in his own characteristic style; but a limited circle of friends and such a vast array of unfamiliar names as this newspaper would bring him naturally enforce a sense of modesty, and the gentleman accordingly refuses to have his identity made public. The story, therefore, is written as one of make-believe, and rather gains by the process.

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WITH ample fixed income, current affairs prospered and freedom from outside entanglement, there was no reason why Sidney Drake should vanish. No one could imagine why he had done so.

Hence when worry began it affected not only the immediate family but also the inner hundred in which he moved, the clubs he frequented, business associates to whom he was an asset, and minor circles of acquaintances who ordinarily kept in touch with him. Beyond telephone range the telegraph raked the land for tidings of him. Mrs. Drake avoided only the police in her search, for publicity would have been too humiliating, and through all her distresses she held to the faith that all would come right in the end.

Drake's office sign is non-committal as to his occupation. When he talks of business his friends understand that he refers to properties that he manages. There is enough truth in that to pass review. He might have lived quietly and moved well on a genteel inheritance represented in properties that he does manage, but he aspired to hold his own in expensive company, to give his wife a place as a social leader and to run with the best. With that motive he accepted in his early married life the confidential agency for a product popularly known as Three C's—Choice Cumberland Club—a function which enabled him to gratify his social desires at no sacrifice of prestige.

He had the knack of obtaining orders without soliciting them—by mere suggestion or advice as an apparently disinterested party. His methods, therefore, were far superior to those of a self-confessed wine agent. It was that diplomatic manipulation of trade which rated him high with his principals, and his convivial qualities kept him in brisk demand among his clients. So, more often than not, this business of presenting the merits of Three C's called him out at night. Until now it had never interfered with his returning home.

At three o'clock that morning, when Drake came out of the café where he and some friends had been proving the superior attractions of the Three C's, he decided that he must have a fresh mackerel for breakfast. Therefore he headed for the water front market to get it.

It is not often that the fish dealers there have a customer in a top hat, patent leathers and broadcloth at three in the morning while they are dressing their stands. They entered into voluble competition for the honor and pleasure of supplying this interesting customer with as large a fish as he could carry.

Instead of moving homeward with his prize, Drake walked along the water front. The air lured him on with just enough motion to cool him gratefully after stuffy hours uptown. He thought the river must look pretty under the moonlight. In order the

better to watch its dancing sheen he stepped on a sloop that lay at the pier. Such jeweled treasure had never before enthralled him. The mass of moving color was beautiful beyond his dreams. He felt himself transported to a realm of perfect peace and content.



Putting Nets Aboard Boats.

Photo Copyright 1910 by Edwin Levick.

"Skipper, come and see this fine catch."

"What's that—got a haul already?"

"Yes, sure enough haul; don't look like a mermaid exactly, but I guess it's part human."

Drake caught the drift of this exchange, but it seemed to him to fit naturally into the enchanting scene until he felt himself lifted by the shoulders and a gruff but kindly voice said:—"Ahoy, steady, now; did you come here for a picnic, young man, or what's your business?"

Drake rubbed open his wondering eyes. The wand of magic had indeed shifted the scene. Something pushed suddenly from him the moon tipped river, the sheen of moving color, the luring night breeze, the grimed faces of a ship's crew; and the sky matched the gray of the sea, over which the ship was bumping with sails double reefed. The night had been real; was he now dreaming?

"You don't look like a seafaring man," the gruff voice went on; "and if you think you're a passenger, we ain't allowed to carry passengers."

Drake surveyed his questioner and then himself. He was forward of the fore-castle hatch and had been lifted from a heap of seine nets on which to all appearances he had lain. His silk hat now reposed there, as did the fish bought at the market, still neatly packed. The expanse of shirt bosom showed signs of having served as a sleeping jacket and his broadcloth needed the iron. Spray had flecked with whitish spots like incipient mildew his patent leathers. The ensemble was too tangible to mistake it for a dream.

"I must have made a blunder," he said. "Where am I, please?"

"Well, you're outside the three mile limit. In fact, you're on the Lucy Ann, of Gloucester, bound for porgies off Cape May. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"We can't stand for a passenger or put you ashore. You had better turn to and work your way, I reckon."

"That suits me, but you must show me. I am green at this business."

"You'll learn soon enough, and some day maybe you'll be glad to have it to fall back on. Now come to the cabin and I'll rig you out."

In the outfit which the skipper gave him Drake joined the men on deck. A shift of wind enabled



Cleaning the Day's Catch.

Photo Copyright 1910 by Edwin Levick.

them to let out the reefs, and under a full spread of canvas the Lucy Ann fairly flew ahead.

Drake had crossed the ocean often enough to know it, and in craft of his own in lesser waters he had felt himself a tolerable sailor, but this was a new sensation. The Lucy Ann seemed to him as much a part of the seas as the birds on its surface or the fish beneath. The crew, who had come round from Gloucester on the sloop, were a wholesome sort and let him help

At four o'clock next morning all hands turned out. They lowered two yawls, piled them with seine nets and rowed off to lay the nets, eight men at the oars in each boat. Then they came back for dories and set out their pickets to keep the nets in order. The breakfast horn blew at eight. No one had to be called twice. Then there was another stretch of picketing and net hauling until the noon meal. The same work had to be done in the afternoon. By dusk, when the last haul had been made, the day's catch was reckoned at two hundred bushels of porgies.

This did not finish the day. There remained the work of cleaning the catch and packing it down in ice. With all hands bustling to their capacity, it was eleven o'clock before they finished. Drake's face smarted with sunburn, his hands were red and swollen and the lines had dug deep into his blistered palms. He made no complaint. Everybody got the same treatment, the same hours, the same labor, and everybody took his medicine man fashion. The skipper fed his crew well. That kind of work demanded it. But fagged out as he was, when Drake got to his bunk at eleven that night he found time before he went to sleep to wonder if the folks at home were worried and to wish himself back.

The second day passed as had the first, at the fishing grounds—up at four o'clock, breakfast at eight, keeping the nets properly laid and hauling them in on occasion; and that night the catch again measured two hundred bushels. At meals Drake was carried back to the ravenous hunger of his youth in outing days, when everything tasted good, and he wanted the plate piled high and often. He could feel the return of youth, also, in the surging of his blood, and lame as they were, his muscles quickened with the lust of action.

Good luck had saved him from a hoodlum crew recruited along the city wharves and had cast him among messmates from the Far North, where sailors know only the sea and share its heartiness. He learned to address them by their first names, and from Skipper Jack down they all called him Sid and took him into fellowship from the beginning.

Captivated by the trim and businesslike behavior of the Lucy Ann when he first observed her at sea, he had grown really fond of her with ripening acquaintance. So it was with a tinge of regret that he found the Lucy Ann, just one week after departure from port, tying up again at the slip. Drake sought the skipper.

"You have been mighty good to me," he said, "and I don't remember when I felt as well as I do now. I know I must have been a lot of trouble to you. How much will make it right?"

"Cut that short, Sid," came the skipper's reply. "We were all glad to have you along, even if you weren't invited. You may be a gentleman, but you held your end up. I wish we had you for regular company. As to how much will make it right, I am sorry I can't allow you wages, for the list was full when you joined us; but we had a quick trip and good catch and you are in on the division of extra profits. I figure your share is \$4.50."

As unexpectedly as the sea had swallowed him it yielded him up. Mrs. Drake had quite decided that she must ask the police to put out their drag net when Drake appeared before her. The sight made her speechless, for her astonished gaze fell not on her well groomed husband of other days, but on his presentment in an oil smeared sweater and ill used boots and trousers, his countenance like a pumpkin and his hands rough and calloused and furrowed. A bit of well roped tarpaulin encased the evening attire in which she had last seen him. Unfolding another bundle, he exposed a mess of porgies.

"Caught them myself," he said, "and can guarantee them fresh."

"Sidney! What?"

"Some other time, my dear. I've had the experience of my life. It has made a new man of me. And I think it has taught me to quit being my own best customer."

LONGEST FLIGHT BY BIRDS.

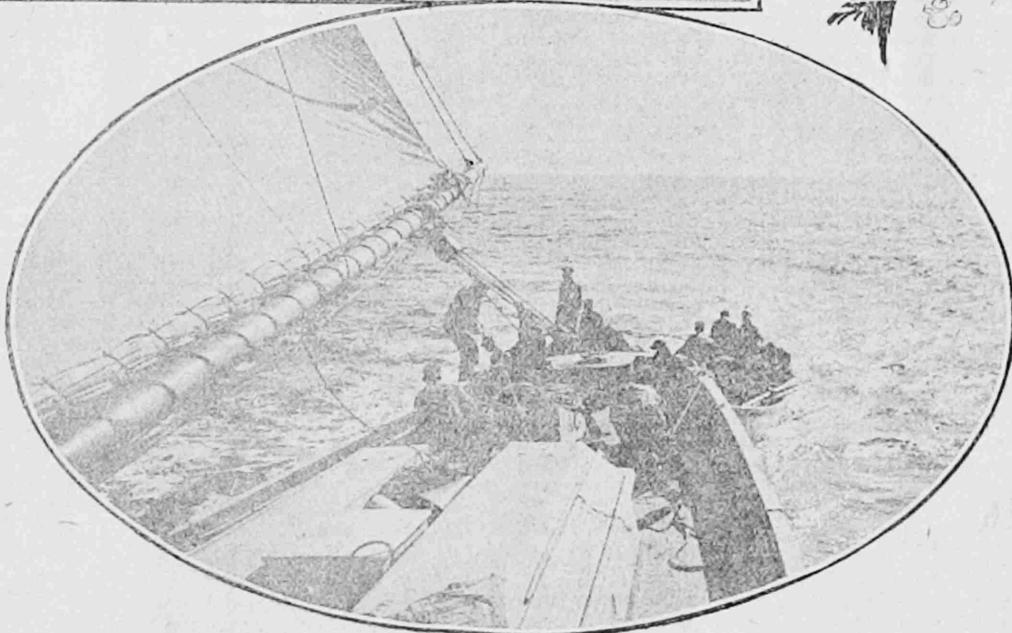
PERHAPS the longest straightaway flight made by birds in their migrations is accomplished by some of the shore and water birds that nest in the islands of Bering Sea and spend the winter at Hawaii and Fanning Island, twenty-two hundred miles away.

Inasmuch as some of these birds live entirely on the shore and are probably unable to rest on the surface of the water, it is thought that they must accomplish the whole distance in a single flight.

Yet, although there are no landmarks for them upon their long journey over a waste of waters, they make their way to their destination with the precision of a rifle shot.

Headed for the Banks.

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They Lowered Two Yawls.

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